

Getting Out of Your Comfort Zone

Acts 10:34-48

I. When you get out of your comfort zone, the most important message is the gospel; 10:34-43.

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. ³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷ You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached-- ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. ³⁹ "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. ⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen--by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Peter stressed that God shows no favoritism, accepts people from every nation, and Jesus is Lord of all. His core beliefs changed to see people as God does. This was a revolutionary revelation to Peter. Yet it was in the teaching of the early prophets who insisted that God's choice of Israel was an act of grace, not of partiality. It called for a response of obedient service, not of careless complacency and comfort.

God was already working His grace in Cornelius, and it showed in his good deeds. Now God would show him His greatest grace in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Spirit. Peter introduces his message as containing good news of peace through Jesus Christ. If Jesus is truly Lord of all, then the gospel and Christ's peace are for all peoples, not just the people of Israel. He could not allow such nonessentials as Jewish food laws to separate him from Gentiles like Cornelius, for whom Christ died.

Jesus' crucifixion is described as hanging Him on a tree. They killed Him, but God raised Him up on the third day. Peter stressed on Jesus' appearance to the apostles after His resurrection, even His eating and drinking with them.

This emphasis would have been particularly important to Gentiles like Cornelius for whom the idea of a bodily resurrection was a new concept.

Peter seems to have been moving toward his salvation appeal with the references to the coming judgment and to repentance and forgiveness through Jesus' name. He was, however, cut short.

We must embrace the revolutionary truths of God's Word that go against our cultural and family beliefs and preferences. When we get out of our comfort zones where God is working, the most important message is the gospel. We see that people desperately need to hear of the love, hope, forgiveness, and eternal life offered by God through Jesus to everyone. It doesn't matter who they are, what they've done, or what's been done to them.

God choosing to work through us is a great honor that should push us beyond our comfort and preferences to where He is working. God is still stirring the hearts of people all around you.

II. When you get out of your comfort zone, you notice the working of the Holy Spirit; 10:44-48.

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." ⁴⁸ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

As they listened to Peter's words about forgiveness for everyone who believes in Christ, the Holy Spirit suddenly descended upon all the Gentiles assembled in Cornelius's house. They began to speak in tongues and to praise God. It was an audible, visible, and objective demonstration of the Spirit's coming upon them. Peter and the Jewish Christian brothers from Joppa witnessed the event and were astounded that God had given the gift of the Spirit to the Gentiles. It has often been described as the "Gentile Pentecost," which is appropriate. Peter called it that when he described the Gentiles as having received the Holy Spirit "just as we have." Like the Pentecost of Acts, it was a unique and unrepeatable event.

The Spirit had already moved among the Gentiles gathered there because of their repentance and faith. Luke hinted at this. The very last words of Peter's sermon before the Spirit descended are "everyone who believes in him." The faith of the Gentiles is even more explicit in Peter's report to Jerusalem, where he compared his own experience of belief in Christ and receipt of the Spirit with the experience of Cornelius and his fellow Gentiles. Peter gave orders for them to be baptized. The narrative concludes with Peter spending several days with his new Christian brothers and sisters.

The power of God to save, transform, and give the Holy Spirit should be enough of a motivator to move us out of our comfort zones and wrong beliefs to where He is working in people's lives.